



Co-Chairs Senator Cohen and Representative Gresko, Vice Chairs Senator Slap and Representative Palm, Ranking Senator Miner and Representative Harding, Honorable Members of the Environment Committee.

I am Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director of CT Votes for Animals, a grass roots animal advocacy organization. I represent close to 6,000 people across the state who rely on CVA to be sure their voices are heard at the CT General Assembly supporting animals.

CVA is requesting removal of Section 5 of the HB 5295, regarding the promotion of rabbits for food consumption. We believe this practice will result in thousands of rabbits slaughtered in CT as the Department of Agriculture will promote a factory like farming program to kill bunnies. While some won't call it factory farming as defined in Iowa, for Connecticut residents slaughtering up to 1000 bunnies per producer is factory farming at its worst. CVA is also troubled to learn the state is intending to put this program in place without any protective standards for the treatment of animals. Additionally, we understand that the program would be complaint driven which as we know is a recipe for disaster as we've seen in the Department's failed attempts to enforce humane laws already on the books.

Just one week ago the Commerce Committee heard an identical provision in HB5263, where more than 100 statements were sent from CT voters adamantly opposed to this initiative. Ordinary citizens were confused and outraged when they learned that just one week later the Environment Committee is considering the same language though now embedded in an omnibus bill to promote CT farms.

As you have heard, rabbits are the third most popular companion pet after cats and dogs, Petco and PetSmart stopped selling pet rabbits and now only display rescue rabbits for adoption – the same treatment they give to dogs and cats. Although DOAG claims there can be a market for rabbit consumption, the Committee needs to look at the real-world experience where Whole Foods stopped selling rabbit meat after a market experiment concluded there was no interest in rabbit consumption.

Lastly and significantly, Governor Lamont travelled to Israel in February to convince Israeli businesses to come to Connecticut. State Economic Development chief David Lehman is working to convince Future Meat to expand in Connecticut. It is one of two cell-grown meat

companies encountered on the trade mission looking to decide over the next six months on where in the U.S. to spend \$75 to \$100 million and create 50 — 75 new jobs.* This is the type of innovation that the Department of Agriculture should be promoting; not the antiquated and barbaric proposal reflected in Section 5 of HB 5295.

I urge the Committee to respect the views of the people of Connecticut and be true to innovation by stripping Section 5 from HB 5295.

Thank you,

Jo-Anne Basile

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* https://www.newhavenindependent.org/article/guv_courts_israeli_start_ups